



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

Steve Beshear, Governor

Leonard K. Peters, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact: Karen Cronen
502-564-3410**

Act now to protect Kentucky's groundwater ***Groundwater Awareness Week March 9-15***

Frankfort, Ky. (March 11, 2014) - The Kentucky Division of Water (DOW) is recognizing Groundwater Awareness Week, March 9-15, by emphasizing the importance of groundwater to communities and the actions Kentuckians can take to protect this vital natural resource.

Groundwater is the water from rain or other precipitation that soaks into the ground and moves downward to fill cracks and other openings in soil and rock. It is an abundant natural resource making up 90 percent of the world's fresh water.

"Groundwater Awareness Week is an excellent time to become educated on local groundwater and watershed issues," said Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Len Peters.

"Collaboration among individual citizens, local governments, and industry is vital to effective management and protection of our groundwater resources."

About half of the US population receives its drinking water from groundwater in wells. In Kentucky, 185 public water systems rely on groundwater in whole or in part, and serve an estimated 1.2 million people. More than 100,000 rural Kentuckians rely on private wells or springs for their drinking water.

Various minerals and pollutants accumulate in groundwater as it moves through the soil. Since everything on land eventually can end up in the water, we need to be mindful of what we put in or on the ground. Activities with the potential to contaminate groundwater include:

- Failing or improper use of septic tanks
- Leaking aboveground and underground storage tanks
- Improper or excessive application of field or lawn fertilizer
- Pet waste
- Leaching nitrates from animal feeding or other agricultural activities
- Improper disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, such as paint and engine oil
- Old, improperly designed landfills
- Illegal disposal of animal remains or trash, especially in sinkholes

The Energy and Environment Cabinet has several programs in place to protect Kentucky's groundwater:

- The Groundwater Protection Program requires anyone conducting activities that have the potential to pollute groundwater, including businesses and homeowners, to develop and implement a Groundwater Protection Plan, which must include pollution prevention measures.
- The Wellhead Protection Program works with public water supplies that rely on groundwater to designate the well or spring recharge area, identify potential contaminant sources in the area, and implement groundwater protection strategies for these areas.
- The DOW Groundwater Section helps protect private water wells by regulating their construction through the Drillers Certification Program. Only certified drillers should be used to drill wells. Private well owners should conduct an annual well check and treat for contaminants. An annual inspection by a qualified water well contractor is the best way to ensure problem-free service and quality water. Preventative maintenance can prolong the life of your well, its related equipment, and is usually less costly than emergency repairs.

Kentuckians can be proactive in protecting groundwater by contacting county extension offices for publications regarding safe and natural household cleaning products, and local officials for information about the location of safe disposal receptacles for toxic products such as paint and used engine oil.

Water conservation provides another way to protect groundwater: install water-saving appliances; plant landscaping that requires less water, and use barrels to collect rainfall for watering your garden. Reducing water use often results in the extra benefit of lower water and energy bills.

For more information about groundwater, well maintenance, groundwater protection plans and wellhead protection, visit <http://water.ky.gov/groundwater>.

###